

**SUMMARY OF THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE
OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION:
3-14 SEPTEMBER 2007**

The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) convened in Madrid, Spain, from 3-14 September 2007. In addition to the work of the COP, UNCCD parties also attended the sixth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 6) from 4-14 September, and the eighth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 8) from 4-7 September. Additional events included a special segment on 12-13 September, which featured a dialogue among high-level officials on the theme "Desertification and adaptation to climate change."

During its opening meeting, many delegations highlighted that COP 8 would be a pivotal meeting in the Convention's history. They looked to both its development of a ten-year strategic plan and its focus on elements related to its institutional structure, such as the relationship between the Secretariat and Global Mechanism, and the formats of the CRIC and CST, to provide new guidance and opportunities for the Convention to achieve its objectives. Negotiations on most elements proceeded slowly but constructively, with delegates indicating overall satisfaction with the outcomes. The decision on programme and budget, however, was not adopted, leaving parties uncertain about how the reforms adopted in Madrid will be implemented

The COP approved twenty-nine decisions before the final gavel at 7:43 am on Saturday, 15 September. These included five decisions related to the CRIC's agenda and eight decisions related to the CST's agenda. The decision on the ten-year strategic plan attracted the most attention from COP 8 delegates, because they saw it as an opportunity to refocus the Convention's institutions with the goal of furthering implementation. The CRIC decision to ask the Secretariat, in consultation with the Global Mechanism, to revise the format of national reports and the CST decision to convene future sessions in a conference-style format contributed additional efforts to reform the UNCCD's implementation mechanisms in the coming decade.

Negotiations on the programme and budget continued into the early hours of Saturday, 15 September, and Japan ultimately indicated that it could not accept the 5% increase in the euro value of the Secretariat's core budget that was incorporated into the draft decision on this agenda item. He called for an Extraordinary COP to take place in New York during the UN General Assembly to finalize this element of the programme and budget decision. As a result, delegates left Madrid's Palacio de Congresos early Saturday morning feeling disappointed that they were not able to deliver all of the elements within the COP's purview that were necessary to enable the Convention to progress.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. The UNCCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 191 parties. The UNCCD recognizes the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is

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demand-driven, and the involvement of local communities in combating desertification and land degradation. The core of the UNCCD is the development of national, subregional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with donors, local communities and NGOs.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the UNCCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. A fifth annex, for Central and Eastern Europe, was elaborated and adopted during the fourth Conference of the Parties (COP 4) in December 2000. Pending the UNCCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent action for Africa and interim measures in other regions and to prepare for COP 1.

COP 1: COP 1 met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. The CST held its first session concurrently from 2-3 October. The COP 1 and CST 1 agendas consisted primarily of organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development as the organization to administer the GM. At the CST's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators. One plenary meeting was devoted to a dialogue between NGOs and delegates. Delegates subsequently decided that similar NGO dialogues should be scheduled at future COP plenary sessions.

COP 2: COP 2 met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November to 11 December 1998. The CST met in parallel with the COP from 1-4 December. Delegates approved arrangements to host the Secretariat in Bonn. Central and Eastern European countries were invited to submit to COP 3 a draft regional implementation annex. The CST established an *ad hoc* panel to follow up its discussion on linkages between traditional and modern knowledge.

COP 3: Parties met for COP 3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999, with the CST meeting from 16-19 November. The COP approved the long-negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the GM. It decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze in depth the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes and to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the UNCCD. Based on recommendations from the CST, the COP appointed an *ad hoc* panel on traditional knowledge and an *ad hoc* panel on early warning systems.

COP 4: COP 4 convened from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany. The CST met from 12-15 December. COP 4's achievements included the adoption of the fifth regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, commencement of work by the *ad hoc* working group to review UNCCD implementation, initiation of the consideration of modalities for the establishment

of the CRIC, submission of proposals to improve the work of the CST, and the adoption of a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support of the UNCCD's implementation.

COP 5: COP 5 met from 1-13 October 2001, in Geneva, Switzerland, and the CST met from 2-5 October. The COP focused on setting the modalities of work for the two-year interval before COP 6. Progress was made in a number of areas, including the establishment of the CRIC, identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and support for a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

CRIC 1: CRIC 1 convened at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. Delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions and addressed seven thematic issues. The meeting also considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the UNCCD's implementation, advice provided by the CST and the GM, and the Secretariat's report on actions aimed at strengthening the relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations.

COP 6: COP 6 met from 25 August - 6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba. The CST and CRIC met concurrently from 26-29 August. Delegates designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD and identified criteria for the COP 7 review of the CRIC, in addition to other decisions, including on: activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; and follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The CST discussed improving its efficiency and effectiveness, among other agenda items.

CRIC 3: The third meeting of the CRIC was held from 2-11 May 2005, in Bonn, Germany. It reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa, considered issues relating to Convention implementation at the global level, shared experiences, and made recommendations for the future work of the Convention.

COP 7: COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. The CST met from 18-21 October and the CRIC met from 18-27 October. Participants reviewed the implementation of the Convention, developed an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF, adopted the programme and budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, and reviewed the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the UN, among other agenda items. A proposal to add an agenda item on the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary was not accepted and discussion on the regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision. The CST considered land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation, among other issues.

IIWG: Following a COP 7 decision, an Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) convened four times from May 2006 - May 2007 with the mandate to review the JIU report and to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. The report of the IIWG's review of the JIU's recommendations and the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention were forwarded to COP 8 for its consideration.

CRIC 5: The fifth session of the CRIC convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 12-21 March 2007, to review implementation of the Convention in affected country parties in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. Much of the meeting was devoted to panel presentations and discussions on selected topics, such as the promotion of technology transfer and know-how, sustainable land management, early warning systems, financial resource mobilization, synergies with other conventions, rehabilitation of degraded lands, and the promotion of new and renewable energy sources. The meeting also addressed how to improve information communication and national reporting, reviewed the International Year on Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), and conducted a Global Interactive Dialogue with stakeholders on investments in rural areas in the context of combating land degradation and desertification.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY APPOINTMENT: Hama Arba Diallo resigned from his position as Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, effective 19 June 2007, following his election as a member of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso. On 3 September, the Bureau endorsed the UN Secretary-General's proposal of Luc Gnacadja (Benin) as the new Executive Secretary. He will assume his official duties on 1 October 2007.

COP 8 REPORT

Participants at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification convened on Monday morning, 3 September 2007, in a welcoming ceremony that was held under the aegis of the Crown Prince and Princess of Spain. In his opening remarks, Grégoire de Kalbermatten, the Convention Secretariat's Officer-in-Charge, welcomed the Prince and Princess of Asturias, paid tribute to former UNCCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo, and highlighted that COP 8 offered a defining moment in the UNCCD's evolution, given recent climatic events and progress in developing the UNCCD ten-year strategic plan. David Mwiraria (Kenya), President of COP 7, paid tribute to Diallo and highlighted the ten-year strategic plan and the programme and budget for 2008-2009 as two of the most important items to be addressed at COP 8.

Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, Mayor of Madrid, welcomed participants and described the city's experience in combating desertification. Cristina Narbona, Minister for the Environment of Spain, noted that her country has doubled its official development assistance and increased its support to Africa, and committed to further support affected countries in their efforts to combat desertification. Felipe de Borbón, Prince of Asturias, welcomed participants to Spain and detailed Spain's longstanding efforts to combat land degradation.

Following an opening reception with Spain's Crown Prince and Princess, delegates reconvened in an opening plenary to elect Minister Narbona as COP 8 President as well as additional officers, adopt the agenda and offer statements. During the two-week session, delegates convened in meetings of the plenary, Committee of the Whole (COW), Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Four contact groups were established to negotiate decisions related to the ten-year strategic

plan, CRIC, CST and programme and budget. A special segment engaged high-level officials in a roundtable discussion on desertification and adaptation to climate change and an exchange of statements. This report summarizes the discussions in the plenary, special segment, COW, CRIC, CST and contact groups, as they relate to the decisions adopted by COP 8.

PLENARY

COP 7 President Mwiraria declared open COP 8 during an opening plenary on Monday afternoon, 3 September. Delegates elected Minister Narbona as COP 8 President by acclamation, following which Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten presented an overview of the Secretariat's work since COP 7. He acknowledged CRIC Chair Franklin Moore's (US) role in making CRIC 5 a success and said the Secretariat looks forward to enhanced cooperation with the Global Mechanism (GM).

The plenary then adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/1 and Corr.1), with two oral revisions: a new sub-item was added to consider a decade of deserts and combating desertification (2010-2020) under item 14 (IYDD); and agenda item 10 was renamed (regional coordination units, RCUs). Following delegates' decision to establish a Committee of the Whole (COW), President Narbona noted that the Bureau had changed the COW's programme of work to allow more time for discussion of agenda item 9 (follow-up of the JIU and strategy development).

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT: During the opening plenary on 3 September, President Narbona invited delegates to elect nine vice-presidents and a Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The COP elected Sem Shikongo (Namibia), Siddarth Behura (India), Khaled al-Sharaa (Syria), Jiří Hlaváček (Czech Republic), Yurie Kolmaz (Ukraine) and Mary Rowen (US) as Vice-Presidents. Delegates also elected William Dar (the Philippines) as CST Chair and noted that Franklin Moore (US) had been elected to chair CRIC 5 and 6. On 4 September, delegates elected the remaining Vice-Presidents for the COP, namely: Hamdi Aloui (Tunisia), Kenneth Roach (Trinidad and Tobago) and Ariel Rusiñol (Uruguay). Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) was designated as Chair of the COW. On 7 September, Kenneth Roach was designated as Rapporteur.

ACCREDITATION OF ORGANIZATIONS AND ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS: Delegates adopted the document on Accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, admission of observers (ICCD/COP(8)/14 and Add.1) without comment.

STATEMENTS BY PARTIES, UN AGENCIES AND OBSERVERS: In their opening remarks, delegations paid tribute to the work of former Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo. Many also emphasized their desire to work together cordially and constructively during COP 8, and highlighted their positions on COP 8 agenda items.

Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), welcomed the work done by the IIWG, supported the GM as a useful tool, expressed the belief that the improved Secretariat will enhance UNCCD implementation, and called for parties to adopt the programme and budget of the Secretariat for 2008-2009. Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, Turkey and Croatia, said political support for the UNCCD requires a

more streamlined and strategic approach, which can be achieved only if the ten-year strategic plan is adopted. Belarus, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe, stated his region's support for the ten-year strategic plan and highlighted the need for significant financial resources. Uganda, on behalf of the African Group, said COP 8 should substantially increase resources to the Secretariat and welcomed the outcomes of the IIWG and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group (AHWG) on national reporting. Paraguay, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, complimented the IIWG's work, stressed the need to finance the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan, and highlighted the need for a sufficient budget for the Secretariat. Myanmar, on behalf of Asia and the Pacific, called for broader collaboration between the Secretariat and the GM and expressed his region's interest in following the issue of results-based management. Canada implored parties to achieve results and progress at COP 8 and said support for the ten-year strategic plan and commitment to its adoption will be a critical measure of COP 8's success and a determining factor in his country's assessment of the value of future participation.

The UN Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction also addressed the COP, outlining their UNCCD-related activities. Fundación IPADE, Spain, on behalf of the NGO community, appealed to donors to contribute new and additional financial resources and said the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan is the "last chance." IUCN – The World Conservation Union expressed hope that COP 8 would give "better attention" to civil society involvement. For more detailed coverage of the opening statements, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04197e.html>.

OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION: This NGO-organized session was held on Tuesday, 11 September, and consisted of discussions around three themes: participation, gender and climate change. UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten noted: the value that such open dialogue sessions could have at the national level; the Secretariat's endeavors to facilitate the participation of NGOs in an efficient and transparent manner; the Secretariat's reliance on NGO networking systems; and the JIU recommendation to improve NGO participation.

Steven Mweya (Uganda) moderated the discussion on participation. The four speakers on this topic highlighted, *inter alia*, that: participation requires access to relevant information and adequate and predictable resources; visions of what participation means vary; NGOs should be involved in follow-up actions to the ten-year strategic plan; and a working group should be established to consider NGO demands. Discussants suggested that the Secretariat: designate a youth focal point; invite parties to include at least one NGO on their delegations; and consider modalities for NGO participation at COPs. COP 8 President Narbona said she would promote NGO participation throughout her presidency.

Mark Biedchareton (France) moderated the discussion on gender. Three speakers presented and made suggestions, including that parties should create a network of women researchers to incorporate traditional approaches to natural

resource management into the CST's work. During the discussion, many participants described national and regional projects that involve women in combating desertification.

Octavio Pérez Pardo (Argentina) moderated the discussion on climate change. Four speakers emphasized climate change-induced migration and its linkages to land degradation, with one speaker presenting a case study of land rehabilitation in Senegal that demonstrated the benefits of NGO work for policy development. Participants: debated the merits of biofuels and agrofuels; discussed pastoralist rights; suggested integrating NGO research into CST work; and stressed the role of NGOs in disseminating targeted information on climate change, adaptation and mitigation. One delegate lamented the poor attendance of government delegates at the open dialogue, although he noted it was better than at COP 7.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.32/Rev.1), the COP takes note, with appreciation, of the Declaration of NGOs attending COP 8, and decides to include it as an annex to the COP 8 report.

SPECIAL SEGMENT: A Special Segment took place on Wednesday and Thursday, 12-13 September. A roundtable discussion on Wednesday afternoon brought 11 ministers, deputy ministers and heads of UN agencies together to discuss desertification and climate change. On Thursday, 85 speakers, including 17 ministers and 9 vice-ministers, addressed the Special Segment.

Round Table: COP 8 President Cristina Narbona chaired the ministerial round table. Several speakers congratulated the UNCCD's Executive Secretary-designate, Luc Gnacadja, who was seated alongside them at the dais. The ministers looked forward to the discussions and outcome of the December United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Bali, Indonesia. Round table participants proposed a number of issues to consider in relation to the relationship between desertification and climate change, including: developing a framework for dialogue at the international and regional levels to mobilize funding to address the linked issues of desertification and climate change; expanding private and public investments and integrating risk considerations related to climate; developing an instrument on drought and access to water; further exploring synergies between the three Rio conventions; focusing on the challenges of climate change for small island states; and taking advantage of existing instruments, such as in relation to climate change and forests.

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, said "political will, not any amount of institutional reform," would enable the three Rio conventions to deliver. Ahmed Djoghla, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), highlighted the CBD's work to develop guidelines on how to include climate change in all its work programmes. Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the WMO, stressed integrating risk prevention in policy making in the context of the conventions' synergies. UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja noted the need for political will at every level and for bringing in new actors, including the private sector.

During the discussion, delegations highlighted the need for: agricultural technologies to curb greenhouse gas emissions; synergies among the Rio conventions; financing for climate

change adaptation and the ten-year strategic plan; and reactivating South-South cooperation. They also called for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, ecosystem management approaches in drylands initiatives, an integrated implementation framework, afforestation and soil conservation. For more detailed coverage of the round table, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04204e.html>

General Statements: On Thursday, COP 8 President Cristina Narbona invited ministers and senior officials to make general statements. UNCCD Secretariat Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten delivered a statement from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which highlighted that the twin threats of climate change and desertification affect our ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and looked forward to the role that the ten-year strategic plan would play in the fight against desertification.

UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja welcomed the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan, which he said provides coherence and a common understanding for the UNCCD's implementation. Outlining his vision to manage a successful business, he "pledged," in consultation with all relevant actors, to restructure the Secretariat to enable it to implement the strategy and all the recommendations in the JIU report as well as results-based and accountable budgeting, draw in private sector actors, and regularly communicate with the public.

In their statements, speakers introduced their UNCCD-related national activities and stressed the need for COP guidance in elaborating synergies among the Rio conventions, links between water and land issues, and people-centered solutions to land degradation. The UNFCCC and CBD highlighted decisions of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), including the agreement to adopt as priority areas of work adaptation and addressing deforestation. Speakers also discussed resource needs, calling for strengthening funding mechanisms for adaptation activities, including through the GEF and other related funds. Funding sources such as the Adaptation Fund and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) were highlighted in connection with efforts to address desertification and climate change. The importance of the GEF as the UNCCD's main financing mechanism was emphasized, and developed country parties were called on to adopt equitable trade incentives that would enable developing countries to increase their participation in global trade.

On specific issues under discussion at COP 8, speakers suggested that the ten-year strategic plan: needs concrete, and preferably quantitative, goals; should emphasize enhanced capacity at the local level to adapt to climate change and increase support to developing countries to combat desertification; will enable the adoption of better regional and global integrated strategies; should reflect the needs of countries in southern and eastern Europe; should be accompanied by an implementation framework; and needs a substantial budget to be effective.

On the GM, speakers said it should: cooperate more closely with the Secretariat, and continue work under its new reforms; be strengthened in its structure; and engage in increased capacity building. One speaker said it should not be made an alternative secretariat or engage in functions that compete with the Secretariat. The GM's host institution, the International

Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), emphasized its strong commitment to the GM. The GM said: it looks forward to "delivering as one" with the Secretariat based on their different mandates and functions; its cooperation with IFAD is growing stronger; and the COP has given strong guidance to the GM and Secretariat on how to move forward. One speaker highlighted its commitment to the Rio Principles and Paris Declaration, and stressed the prioritization of sustainable land management to qualify for UNCCD financing.

Speakers emphasized the role the CST should play in serving as a center of knowledge and expertise on desertification. Several speakers supported the proposal for a 2010-2020 decade for combating desertification, and others welcomed the contributions and deliberations emanating from this conference on the preparations for the upcoming meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development where desertification and land management issues will be addressed. For more detailed coverage of these statements, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04205e.html>

Based on the statements during the Special Segment, a Madrid Declaration was developed and COP 8 President Narbona introduced it during the closing plenary. The Declaration notes: "The strategic orientation of the Convention, which has now been consolidated in Madrid, reaffirms our common political commitment to the process of UNCCD implementation and promises to provide a more specific response to this question. We can fulfill our commitments and we must do so. All that is needed is stronger political will." It also lays down seven areas to which attention should be directed, namely:

- establishment of specific targets as part of the UNCCD process through the adoption and pursuit of a ten-year strategic plan;
- a target set for activities related to carbon sinks and increased land productivity to be met in all drylands;
- consideration of the social and economic costs of desertification;
- strengthened linkages through increased cooperation between the three Rio conventions;
- promotion of scientific and technological cooperation over vulnerability, degradation and carbon sinks;
- closer relations between institutions and programmes to facilitate access by UNCCD parties to the human and financial resources they need to stimulate national efforts; and
- promotion of effective participation by NGOs and other civil society stakeholders in the UNCCD process.

A draft decision to take note of the Madrid Declaration was considered by the COW on Saturday morning, 15 September, and its title was orally amended. The plenary subsequently adopted the decision as amended.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.31), the COP takes note of the Declaration attached to the decision, and decides to annex the Declaration to the COP 8 report.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW was chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) and met throughout the two weeks. A contact group on the ten-year strategic plan and the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) was established under the chairmanship of COP 8 Vice-President Sem Shikongo (Namibia). It met throughout the two-week session,

at times in a smaller “Friends of the Chair” group. A contact group on the programme and budget was established Friday, 7 September, and met throughout the second week, co-chaired by Anaedu and Jozef Buys (Belgium). This summary of the COW is organized according to the decisions it adopted. Unless otherwise noted, all decisions were adopted during the closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN AND FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION:

On Tuesday, 4 September, the Secretariat introduced the relevant agenda items’ reports on the follow-up to the JIU report and strategy (ICCD/COP(8)/10) and INF.5), and on the RCUs (ICCD/COP(8)/13). Sem Shikongo, who chaired the IIWG, also introduced two documents: the report, based on the review by the IIWG that includes recommendations of how best to address the JIU recommendations (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.1), and the follow-up to the JIU (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.2) report with an addendum, the draft ten year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018).

Following initial comments by delegations, in which a majority expressed support for the draft ten-year strategic plan, an open-ended contact group chaired by Shikongo was established to consider the ten-year strategic plan and the RCUs, but was instructed not to re-open for negotiation agreed-upon issues in the ten-year strategic plan. The contact group agreed to: follow the standard procedures for the participation of observers, focus on all issues relating to the implementation framework, and produce one draft decision focused on the adoption of the strategy, implementation framework, and recommendations for follow-up for submission to the COW.

The contact group met from Wednesday to Friday, 5-7 September, and again on Sunday afternoon, 9 September. Three sessions were dedicated to a preliminary exchange of views. Delegates generally agreed on many of the provisions concerning the parties, CST, CRIC, Secretariat, GM, GEF, and civil society, but diverged on the elements pertaining to the preambular paragraphs, Secretariat-GM coordination, RCUs, performance monitoring and indicator development, and the cost implications of the strategic plan and what the first steps should be to follow it up. They also differed on whether to use the strategic plan as a basis for their deliberations or the input from their exchanges.

In their preliminary remarks on the draft, delegates disagreed on the need for an independent external audit of the GM with some citing cost, others suggesting doing so after the joint work plan has been implemented, while some argued that the evaluation should focus on the relationship between the Secretariat and the GM, and not the GM specifically. With regard to the RCUs, discussion focused on the: conceptual differences between regional coordination, units, and programmes; urgency for regional institutions and their specific models; institutions needed to implement UNCCD-mandated regional programmes; relevance of RCUs designed eight years ago; and optimal operations.

With regard to performance monitoring, delegates diverged on: the use of “monitoring” as a concept; references to Annex II of the strategic plan because it was not a consensus text; the development at the global level of, and commitment of

actors to, reporting guidelines and indicators; and the form the mid-term evaluation would take. On costing and budgeting, delegates proposed: the use of a resource-based budgeting approach in the elaboration of the budgetary requirements; to include actors in addition to parties in the provision of resources; and emphasis on resource mobilization among affected countries because commitment would lead to interest from other parties.

The first full draft of the decision was circulated on Monday, 10 September. The “Friends of the Chair Group” was tasked with negotiating the draft. The Group met in closed-door sessions during the second week. On Friday morning, 14 September, the group met in a joint session with the contact group on programme and budget to discuss the integration of the ten-year strategic plan into the programme and budget.

On Friday evening, the contact group reconvened, reached agreement on its draft decision, and transmitted it to the COW, which adopted it on Saturday morning, 15 September, following two amendments. Brazil noted that paragraph 30 (requiring evidence-based options for improving regional coordination arrangements), not 33 (on the decision to continue support for the RCUs), was the agreed paragraph number that should be cited in paragraph 32(b) (options for improving the RCUs). Chair Anaedu pointed out an omission in paragraph 27 requiring that the report of the JIU’s review of the GM be “submitted to COP 9 for consideration.” The closing plenary adopted the decision without comment as orally amended by the COW.

Final Decision: In its preambular provisions (ICCD/COP(8)/L.17), the COP decision: emphasizes that the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan requires efforts from all parties, recognizes the responsibilities of all parties and the need for adequate resources for the Convention and its institutions, underlines the importance of the efficient implementation of the Convention, and decides to adopt the ten-year strategic plan and the specific guidelines enacted on the implementation Framework. The decision also, *inter alia*, requests parties to operationalize the strategy according to their national priorities and based on the reporting guidelines, and report the progress made in implementing the strategic plan at COP 9. The CST is requested to prepare a costed two-year work programme, include this item on its CST 9 agenda and present it to COP 9, and provide advice to the CRIC on how best to measure progress on the strategic objectives.

The decision also: decides that the CRIC is responsible for review of the implementation of the strategic plan and that CRIC 7 be a special session to consider methodological matters to advance the strategy’s implementation; and requests it, in consultation with others, to prepare its own draft multi-year work programme and to finalize proposals for the performance review and assessment of the UNCCD implementation emanating from CST 9 for discussion at COP 9. It also decides that CST 9 shall be held in conjunction with CRIC 7.

The GM is requested to revise its current work plan to make it consistent with the strategic plan, present its draft multi-year work plan and biennial programme of work to CRIC 7 for review and then consideration at COP 9, and is urged to promote actions leading to the mobilization of international and national resources needed by affected country parties. The UNCCD Executive Secretariat is requested to: prepare a draft

multi-year work plan with a supplementary costed biennial work programme in keeping with the strategic plan and to present them to CRIC 7 for review and COP 9 for consideration, and to report on progress in the implementation of the Strategy to COP 9.

On GM-Secretariat coordination, the COP: directs the executives to implement the strategic plan within their respective mandates, and requests them to submit a draft joint work programme that includes indicators of successful cooperation based on resource-based management for review at CRIC 7 and consideration by COP 9, as well as by the JIU during its evaluation of the GM. The terms of reference and time-frame for the evaluation are also elaborated. Further, the decision calls on each region to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary and GM, on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention. The decision further requests the Executive Secretary to compile regional proposals and the means for operationalizing them for consideration at COP 9, taking into account the GM's views.

On performance monitoring, the decision invites parties to develop nationally and regionally relevant indicators, requests the Executive Secretary to consolidate them and to ensure the integration of recommendations from CST 9 based on discussions at CRIC 8 relevant to establishing reporting guidelines in line with the strategic plan. The decision also affirms the COP as the main body to assess and review overall implementation of the strategic plan, and decides that COP 10 will develop appropriate modalities, criteria and terms of reference for an independent mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan.

On costing of the plan, the decision encourages parties to consider prioritizing the need for supporting the implementation of the strategic plan, recognizes the need for parties to realign their National Action Programmes (NAPs) with the strategic plan, invites parties to mobilize resources for this exercise, and invites developed country parties, multilateral organizations, the private sector and relevant organizations to make resources available to affected developing countries for the implementation of the strategic plan.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The programme and budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (ICCD/COP(8)/2/ and Add.1-11) was addressed in the COW on Thursday, 6 September, and in an open-ended contact group beginning on Friday, 7 September, and continuing through the second week.

In the COW on Thursday, 6 September, UNCCD Secretariat Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten reported on the programme and budget, noting that the proposed budget for the biennium 2008-2009 is a maintenance budget and offering possible implications of results-based planning, programming and budgeting. Following plenary, delegations convened in an open-ended contact group. The Secretariat made initial remarks on the impact of the falling value of the US dollar on the Secretariat's budget. Some delegations focused on the need to link the budget to the programme, including the outcomes of the contact groups on the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC. Additional comments included: expressing satisfaction with the proposed budget; objecting to the proposed percentage increase in the budget; questioning the UNCCD's failure to shift to euro accounting;

objecting to the Secretariat's tendency to move towards becoming an implementing agency; inquiring about the large line-item for staff training; and urging the Secretariat to move towards results-based management.

The contact group then proceeded to discuss a draft decision. Participants inquired about the percentage of the staff cost in the budget, and expressed concern that the average expenditure per person is higher than for the other Rio convention secretariats. The group discussed a note from the CST Chair to the Chair of this contact group, which describes the financial implications of the CST's decisions. The group also discussed the budget for the GM (ICCD/COP(8)/2/Add.2). Following one delegation's suggestion, the group identified the key messages that should be conveyed in the decision on programme and budget, including: aligning the budget with the ten-year strategic plan; seeking judicious use of Supplementary Fund resources; and stressing clarity of financial reporting based on results-based management.

On Friday morning, 14 September, the contact groups on budget and the ten-year strategic plan held a joint meeting. Shikongo, Chair of the contact group on the strategic plan, said that remaining problems in his group depended on decisions of the budget group. Most delegations agreed that the strategic plan is a framework for UNCCD implementation and should be integrated into the programme and budget. Due to time constraints in switching to results-based budgeting at this COP, one delegation suggested that budgeting for the implementation of the strategic plan could be done at COP 9. Another delegation said that the implementation of the strategic plan is almost cost neutral. The Secretariat asked the COP to provide the new Executive Secretary with strategic guidance and necessary tools to implement the UNCCD in its next cycle. Chair Anaedu, agreed, noting that the Executive Secretary also needs flexibility in taking actions.

On a proposal to authorize the Executive Secretary for the biennium 2008-2009 to "notify parties of their contributions for 2008 and 2009 in euros," some delegations proposed that they also be notified in "US dollars." There was also much debate on Secretariat staffing. Some delegations supported the staffing table proposed by the Secretariat, while others objected, especially in relation to the increase of one P-2 position and funding for two frozen general service posts requested by the Secretariat.

Another issue that generated much discussion was the percentage increase in the Secretariat's budget for 2008 and 2009. Various options were tabled by delegations, including: adoption of the Secretariat's proposed budget; a 10%, 5% or 3.5% increase in euro terms; a 5% increase in US dollar terms; and zero nominal growth in US dollar terms. Co-Chair Anaedu explained that a 5% increase in US dollar terms would mean a 10% decrease in euro terms. At 11:10 pm Friday, 14 September, Co-Chairs Buys and Anaedu proposed adopting a decision on a 5% budget increase in euro terms. After three hours of debate, all but two delegations agreed. One delegate had a reservation, but would not block the consensus.

At 6:45 am, Saturday, 15 September, at the final meeting of the COW, Anaedu invited delegations to consider the draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2008-2009. Japan said his delegation was unable to accept the budget proposed in the draft decision. As a way forward, he

requested, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, Part II (sessions), Rule 4 (date of sessions), paragraphs 3 and 4, that an Extraordinary COP be held in New York as part of a meeting of the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly.

Swaziland expressed concern about delegating the decision to a group that had not been involved in the UNCCD negotiations, and suggested holding it in Tokyo instead. Australia said her delegation was willing to consider Japan's proposal, and hoped to solve the issue as quickly as possible. Cuba, joined by Argentina and Saudi Arabia, objected to the proposal and suggested continuing the meeting for another 10 hours until a decision was made. Recalling the UNCCD Rules of Procedure, Cuba further proposed that if an Extraordinary COP is to be held, it should take place in the headquarters of the Convention, unless otherwise decided, and must be open to all parties. Portugal expressed disappointment, and hoped that Japan would reconsider its position in the next few weeks, but welcomed the proposal to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York.

Chair Anaedu proposed holding an Extraordinary COP in New York, but not in the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly. He further suggested, and the COW agreed, that: the key delegates who have been involved in the process should participate in the session and agreed text should not be renegotiated.

Following the COW meeting, the plenary convened to consider the programme and budget and the COP decided to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York during the General Assembly meeting to solve the pending issue on budget.

Final Decision: The draft decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.27) was not adopted by the COP, because Japan could not agree on paragraph 8, which approves the core budget for the biennium 2008-2009, amounting to €15,049,000. The COP did take a decision, however, to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York during the General Assembly meeting to consider this draft decision and included the agreement that this paragraph will be the only issue for discussion.

The draft decision contains 22 operative paragraphs, including agreements to, *inter alia*: introduce the euro as the accounting currency from 2010-2011; adopt the indicative scale of contributions for 2008 and 2009; ask the Executive Secretary to notify parties of their indicative "euro and US dollar" contributions for 2008 and 2009, which should be payable in "euro or at the current US dollar equivalent;" authorize the Executive Secretary to review, in the 2008-2009 biennium, the Secretariat's structure and allocation of posts in light of the ten-year strategic plan; and note that the operations of the Secretariat and GM must be managed on the basis of the amount of the approved biennium core budget.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARATION FOR CSD 16 AND CSD 17: The COW discussed this agenda item on 10 September. Following the introduction of the documentation for this item (ICCD/COP(8)/5), countries noted the opportunity to raise the profile of the UNCCD at CSD 16 and 17, which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. This agenda item was passed from the COW to the contact group on the CRIC, where it was addressed on Wednesday and Thursday,

12 and 13 September. Discussion revolved around whether the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD could influence the work programme for, or the outcomes of, CSD 16 and CSD 17, and the level of detail they should provide in this regard.

Final Decision: Text in the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.16/Rev.1) requests the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, to actively prepare for and participate in CSD 16 and 17 to ensure that core UNCCD issues are duly considered and a successful outcome achieved from the two sessions. The decision lists four sets of issues for the Executive Secretary to submit for the consideration of the CSD.

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES OR INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO ASSIST THE COP IN REGULARLY REVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: On Wednesday, 12 September, CRIC Chair Moore explained that all decisions related to the CRIC, with the exception of the work programme for CRIC 7, had been passed to the contact group on the CRIC by the COW to facilitate completion of work. The contact group addressed this item on Wednesday and Thursday, 12-13 September. All parties agreed on the desire to renew the CRIC, but disagreed on whether to: make it a permanent body with terms of reference determined at COP 8; make it a permanent body with terms of reference determined at a later date; or renew its mandate for a time-bound period. Parties agreed that, given the time constraints, reviewing the terms of reference would not be feasible at COP 8 but should be addressed at COP 9. One delegation suggested, and other parties agreed, to a compromise in which the CRIC's mandate is renewed but no time constraints would be imposed.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.15), the COP renews the mandate of the CRIC as a subsidiary body of the COP, functioning under its present terms of reference, where applicable, until COP 9, during which the COP shall consider and revise, bearing in mind the ten-year strategic plan, relevant COP 8 decisions and the outcomes of CRIC 7 and 8.

RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE: This item was considered on Wednesday, 12 September. COW Chair Anaedu invited delegates to consider a draft text for Rule 47 (voting majority required for decisions to be adopted) (ICCD/COP(8)/6). Several delegations said consensus is the best method for multilateral organizations and did not support decision-making procedures by voting. The decision was distributed Friday, 14 September, and was subsequently adopted in the COW and closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.22), the COP requests the Secretariat to include consideration of this outstanding rule of procedure in the agenda of COP 9 and to report on the status of similar rules of procedure in other multilateral environmental agreements.

AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS: The *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts (AHGE) met three times from Monday to Thursday, 10-13 September, and considered procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation (ICCD/COP(8)/7) and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(8)/8). The Secretariat noted that the two issues have been pending since COP 2. Delegations commented that since implementation of the ten-year strategic

plan and the CRIC's future were still under discussion, consideration of the items was premature. The Group drafted two decisions, which the COP adopted on Friday, 14 September.

Final Decisions: In the two decisions (ICCD/COP(8)/L.22 and ICCD/COP(8)/L.23), the COP decides to reconvene, at COP 9, the open-ended AHGE to examine further and make recommendations on these two issues; invites any parties and interested institutions and organizations wishing to communicate their views on these issues to do so in writing to the Secretariat by 31 January 2009; requests the Secretariat to prepare two new working documents on these issues; and decides that the AHGE shall take as the basis of its work the new working documents prepared by the Secretariat.

OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DESERTS AND DESERTIFICATION (IYDD): Delegates discussed the report (ICCD/COP(8)/11) for this agenda item on Monday, 10 September. They highlighted events hosted in their countries in relation to the IYDD. Algeria, supported by many other parties, proposed calling on the UN General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 the Decade of Deserts and Desertification. A decision was considered and adopted by the COW and the closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.24) requests the Secretariat to explore ways and means to address the recommendations in the report on the outcomes of the IYDD and invites the General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 the Decade of Deserts and Combating Desertification.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SECRETARIAT AND ITS HOST COUNTRY: This item was discussed in the COW on Monday, 10 September. The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/COP(8)/12), highlighting the ways and fora through which cooperation has taken place. Germany thanked the Secretariat for its review of the relations and said it looked forward to meeting the new Executive Secretary to discuss the possibilities of continued cooperation. A decision was considered and adopted by the COW and the closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

Final Decision: The decision on relations between the Secretariat and its host country (ICCD/COP(8)/L.25) requests the Secretariat to continue developing relations with national, statewide and city-level actors in Germany and to seek cost-effective solutions for official meetings held in Bonn. It invites Germany to continue contributing, on a voluntary basis, to meetings organized in Bonn and to continue to absorb most of the costs and responsibilities for maintaining and operating the Secretariat's premises.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COP 9: COP 8 delegates considered the decision for the programme of work at COP 9 during the closing plenary, and adopted it as orally amended to note that the COP will consider the programme and budget for 2010-2011 and not 2010-2012.

Final Decision: The decision on the COP 9 programme of work (ICCD/COP(8)/L.26) decides to include the following items on the COP 9, and if necessary COP 10, agendas: programme and budget for 2010-2011; review of implementation of the Convention, including the reports of the CRIC and CST; review of activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other conventions, organizations and

agencies; consideration of the outcome of CSD 16 and CSD 17; outstanding items, including rule 47 of the rules of procedure; preparation for the Decade of Deserts and Combating Desertification; and a report on relations between the secretariat and its host country. The COP also decides to include interactive dialogue sessions with stakeholders, including ministers, NGOs and members of parliament.

EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF SPAIN: The COW considered a draft decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.2) on this item on Saturday, 15 September, which was subsequently adopted by the plenary.

Final Decision: In this decision, the COP expresses its gratitude to the Government of Spain for having made it possible for the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in the city of Madrid, and requests the Government of Spain to convey to the people of Spain the gratitude of the parties to the Convention for the hospitality and warm welcome.

DATE AND VENUE OF COP 9: A draft decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.29) on this item was considered in the COW on Saturday, 15 September, and was subsequently adopted by the plenary.

Final Decision: The COP: decides that COP 9 will be held in Bonn, Germany in Autumn 2009, in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session and meet the additional financial cost; invites the Executive Secretary in consultation with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to accommodate any offer from a party to host COP 9; and requests the Executive Secretary to take necessary measures to prepare for COP 9.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC Chair Franklin Moore (US) opened the session on Wednesday, 5 September. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(6)/1), except the sub-item on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat (ICCD/CRIC(6)/2), which was taken over by the COW. The Committee also adopted its organization of work contained in Annex II of the agenda.

The CRIC met from Wednesday, 5 September, to Friday, 14 September, to consider: the CRIC 5 report; the report on enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention; the GM; financing multilateral agencies and institutions; and the report on the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on national reporting. An open-ended contact group on review of implementation of the Convention was established on Thursday, 6 September, chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland). The contact group met regularly from 6-13 September, and developed five draft decisions. Delegates agreed to eliminate a sixth draft decision, on necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention. At 10:20 pm on Friday, 14 September, the CRIC approved its draft decisions and report, which were adopted by the plenary at 11:30 pm.

In its closing session, the CRIC also nominated and elected by acclamation the following as Vice-Chairs to the Bureau of CRIC 7 and CRIC 8: Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon) for the Asian

Group; Stephen Muwaya (Uganda) for the African Group; Ogtay Jafarov (Azerbaijan) for the Eastern European Group; Markku Aho (Finland) for the Western European and Other States Group.

STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION IN ALL REGIONS: The CRIC addressed the agenda item on review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements on Wednesday and Thursday, 5-6 September, and on Friday, 14 September. On 5 September, Chair Moore introduced the CRIC 5 report (ICCD/CRIC(5)/11), drawing attention to its seven recommendations.

Debate in the contact group on this draft decision revolved around balancing developed and developing country party responsibilities related to: participatory natural resource management; capacity building for NAP implementation; and commitment of special funds to promote participation of NGOs, community-based organizations and other elements of civil society.

Debate also revolved around the role of the GM in facilitating the implementation of the Convention. During the CRIC, opinions on the GM diverged, with some expressing support for, and others disappointment in, the mechanism. Some delegates emphasized the misconception that the GM is a fundraiser. Developing countries highlighted several concerns regarding the GM, including that it: does not benefit all countries and regions; has “unacceptable” criteria for determining support; and oversteps its mandate. One developing country said its dissatisfaction lay in the fact that, while the climate change and biodiversity conventions were initially granted “funding mechanisms,” the UNCCD received only a “broker,” and thus has less funds.

Although several parties stressed the importance of including reference to traditional knowledge in this decision, these were eventually removed, with several other parties stressing that this issue is being addressed in other fora. For this same reason, one delegation requested deleting text related to trade and market regulations, as well as on land tenure, which they argued is a national issue. Parties agreed to add a paragraph related to RCUs, consistent with language agreed in the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.1) the COP:

- invites parties and international institutions to strengthen and standardize UNCCD reporting;
- urges affected country parties to facilitate participation of all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention;
- urges developed country parties and invites international organizations to support capacity building in a sustainable manner in all areas relevant to the implementation of NAPs;
- invites developing countries to develop an enabling environment for sustainable land management and integrated water management;
- urges developed country parties, and invites multilateral organizations, to mobilize and provide substantial financial resources from all sources for implementation of the objectives of the Convention;
- invites parties and international organizations to support participatory natural resource management;

- continues to support, without pre-judging the outcome of the RCU review process outlined in the ten-year strategic plan, existing RCUs.

The COP also requests the GM to: play a more active role in mobilizing resources and maintaining a geographical balance; and to better capitalize on the demand-driven policy formulation process taking place in the context of the Regional Implementation Annexes and the NAPs.

MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: Parties debated the roles that developed and developing country parties should play in resource mobilization. They agreed to delete text to channel investments for sustainable land management through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, but to retain text referring to new modalities of aid.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.3) invites affected country parties to make more consistent domestic budget allocations for rural development and advocate a greater focus on the new modalities of aid delivery and urges developed country parties to mainstream sustainable land management into donor programming. Prioritizing strategies and streamlining procedures in the context of the Paris Declaration is also addressed.

COLLABORATION WITH THE GEF: During the CRIC, parties expressed differing views regarding the GEF: while several parties thanked the GEF for its support and complimented its reforms, others asked why their projects had not received funding and highlighted difficulties in obtaining timely support. Parties asked the GEF to: equalize its funding across the Rio conventions; help parties obtain co-financing; facilitate resource mobilization from the private sector; and improve communication with national focal points.

Parties in the contact group agreed to delete language related to the Climate Change Funds in the draft decision on the GEF. Discussions included: how the ten-year strategic plan could be brought to the attention of the GEF; how to ensure that the text provided guidance related to the fifth replenishment cycle of the GEF (GEF-5); and the role that the GEF and National Focal Points (NFPs) should play in facilitating access of affected country parties to relevant funding mechanisms as well as NFP involvement in development and implementation of relevant GEF-funded projects.

Final Decision: Decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.4: invites the GEF to effectively and expeditiously implement the Focal Area Strategy on Land Degradation for GEF-4; invites the GEF Council to provide adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional financial resources, for this focal area under GEF-5; invites the GEF to consider simplifying its funding procedures; requests the GM to improve assistance to eligible parties, in collaboration with the GEF, in identifying and accessing co-financing from donors; and requests the Executive Secretary to bring the ten-year strategic plan to the GEF Council’s attention.

ACTIVITIES FOR PROMOTING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES: Parties agreed that preambular text on this decision should recognize the need to strengthen trans-

disciplinary scientific understanding of the linkages between biodiversity, climate change and land degradation in order to improve coordination between the Rio conventions. One delegation requested that language referring to “conservation” of forests, biodiversity and land and water be replaced by language related to “sustainable use” and “sustainable management.”

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.5) encourages affected country parties to establish linkages between NAPs and areas driving international support and to develop a framework to promote synergies in implementing national plans under the three Rio conventions. Developed country parties are encouraged to help developing countries access new and additional financial resources, including through complementarities with other multilateral environmental agreements.

IMPROVING THE PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION, AS WELL AS THE QUALITY AND FORMAT OF REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE COP:

During both the CRIC and the contact group, some parties argued that the AHWG had not fulfilled its terms of reference on developing guidelines to improve reporting procedures. In the contact group, one delegation suggested, and others agreed in principle, to ask the Secretariat and the GM to seek external support to develop reporting guidelines prior to CRIC 7, for consideration at the CRIC. However, they could not decide whether to request the “Secretariat and the GM,” “Secretariat in collaboration with the GM,” or “Secretariat with advice from the GM” to develop reporting guidelines. This debate on the Secretariat-GM relationship stemmed from discussions in the CRIC, in which parties suggested the GM should: work better with the Secretariat; develop a joint work programme with the Secretariat; and integrate into the Secretariat. The Group agreed to use language adopted by the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan.

Parties further wanted to request the Secretariat to consult with the secretariats of the other Rio conventions to harmonize reporting systems, but reconsidered language to this effect when they were informed that UNFCCC and CBD efforts to harmonize their national reports had encountered legal challenges.

Final Decision: In its final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.6), parties request the Executive Secretary, taking into account the views of the GM and seeking external support, to develop draft reporting guidelines, in line with the ten-year strategic plan and before CRIC 7, on support to the implementation of the Convention to the COP. The COP also requests the Secretariat to consult with the other secretariats of the JLG and advise on ways to make reporting more efficient.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR CRIC 7: This decision was developed by the Friends of the Chair of the open-ended contact group on the ten-year strategic plan, and was adopted by the COW and plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

Final Decision: Decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.19/Rev.1 decides that CRIC 7 will: be a special intersessional session to consider methodological matters to advance the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan; consider the work programmes of the

Secretariat, Secretariat and the GM, GM, CST and CRIC; and consider indicators and monitoring for the ten-year strategic plan and the format of future CRIC meetings.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Chair William Dar (the Philippines) opened the eighth session of the CST on Tuesday, 4 September, and urged the Committee to focus on a science, rather than process-driven, approach and to not “shy away” from reforms.

Delegates adopted the agenda and the organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/1), as orally revised to rearrange the topics in the Group of Experts’ report, based on the availability of the presenters. Portugal, on behalf of the EU, requested that implications of the IIWG on the CST also be considered. The Committee elected as Vice-Chairs: Michel Sedogo (Burkina Faso), Uladzimir Sauchanka (Belarus), Richard Escadafal (France), and Maria Nery Urquiza Rodriguez (Cuba). Rodriguez also served as Rapporteur.

The CST met from Tuesday to Friday, 4-7 September, to consider items including: roster of independent experts; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST; report of the CST Bureau; summary of activities of the Bureau during the intersessional period; the UNCCD fellowship programme; review of the Group of Experts’ functions and work and procedures for its renewal; report on progress of the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project; CST programme of work; and priority theme of the effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation: assessment, field experience gained, and integration of mitigation and adaptation practices for livelihood improvement.

A contact group was created Thursday, 6 September, to develop draft decisions, which were approved by the CST on Friday, 7 September. The decisions were adopted by the COP plenary on 7 September.

PRIORITY THEME: On Wednesday and Thursday, 5-6 September, the CST considered the priority theme for its ninth session: Effects of Climatic Variations and Human Activities on Land Degradation: Assessment, Field Experience Gained, and Integration of Mitigation and Adaptation Practices for Livelihood Improvement (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/MISC.1). Representatives from Bulgaria, Mongolia and Mexico offered papers on their countries’ environmental challenges, research and lessons learned related to this theme. The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) presented a review of the connections between climate change and desertification, and their effects on poverty and food insecurity. During the discussion, Tunisia emphasized the importance of traditional and local knowledge in identifying strategies to combat desertification, and Iceland reported on the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change, which he said had recommended asking the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to develop a special report on this issue. No decision was taken on this agenda item.

ROSTER OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS: On Thursday, 6 September, the CST considered the Roster of Independent Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/9). The Secretariat highlighted the need to update the roster. No comments were offered.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. Brazil suggested changing the reference to proposing new candidates to achieve better representation of “women,” to a call for better “gender balance.” The CST adopted the draft decision with this amendment.

Final Decision: In the decision on the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(7)/L.7), the COP encourages parties to revise and update the details of national experts already in the database, and to propose new candidates to achieve better gender balance and representation of all relevant disciplines. It also invites parties that have not done so to submit nominations no later than six months before COP 9.

UNCCD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME: On Wednesday, 5 September, the CST considered the report on a UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5). Several delegates highlighted their countries’ own training programmes and areas on which training could focus. Israel said it would offer funding for ten post-graduate students at the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research to match UNCCD funding. The US inquired about the programme’s funding source.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. Syria objected to referring to specific institutions in the decision, and proposed deleting a preambular paragraph noting the offer of the Blaustein Institute. The decision was adopted as amended.

Final Decision: In the decision on the UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(8)/L.8), the COP requests the Secretariat to establish a UNCCD fellowship programme, subject to voluntary funding, according to the terms of reference annexed to document ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5. It also encourages parties and other interested organizations to make available the necessary funds.

FINAL REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS: On Tuesday and Wednesday, 4-5 September, the CST considered the final report of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1 to Add.9). The Group’s Coordinator, Alejandro León (Chile), introduced its work, following which delegates addressed the studies undertaken by this Group, facilitated by the lead expert for each study.

Elena Abraham (Argentina) presented “Benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and assessment of desertification” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1). Delegates called attention to the resources necessary to create and implement benchmarks and indicators. Brazil expressed concern with the adoption of models that are not specific to a country, stating that they could be a constraint on sovereignty. Romania recalled that this topic gave the CST 6 Bureau “headaches,” and proposed relying on existing indicators.

Maurizio Sciortino (Italy) presented “Communication strategy: development of a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network – THEMANET” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.2). Many parties acknowledged the importance of the tool, while others sought clarification on, *inter alia*: links to other databases, topics covered, languages used, inclusion of traditional knowledge, funding options for maintenance and running costs, and the target audience.

Anders Hjort-af-Ornäs (Sweden) presented “Integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.3). Participants inquired about how the study countries were selected and suggested alternative indicators.

Delegates received a copy of “Opportunities for Synergy Among the Environmental Conventions: Results of National and Local Level Workshops,” which was produced in relation to the Group of Experts’ work on “Development of synergy with other related conventions” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.4). No comments were offered.

H.P. Singh (India) presented the report on “Case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.5). Egypt noted the importance of such research in demonstrating to policy makers the economic value of science. France underscored the value of comparative analyses of case studies.

Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Japan) presented the study on methodologies for the assessment of desertification at global, regional and local levels (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.6). Several speakers discussed their monitoring system experiences.

Alejandro León presented “Identification of perceived gaps between biophysical, socioeconomic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, their causes and ways of eliminating them” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.7). Many parties commended the work, and Italy noted his country’s creation of a traditional knowledge center. Other parties emphasized the lack of resources for acquiring and disseminating traditional and modern knowledge and for technology transfer. Brazil highlighted traditional knowledge ownership rights, and Kenya asked about the intellectual property rights associated with technology transfer. NGO representatives stressed the need to involve communities throughout the project cycle.

Castillo Victor Sanchez (Spain) presented “Guidelines for early warning systems” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.8). The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction said it is willing to assist in the mobilization of resources to promote activities in the area of early warning systems to mitigate the effects of drought and land degradation.

Alejandro León presented “Guidelines for updating the *World Atlas of Desertification*” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.9). The US said that relying on benchmarks and indicators may not be appropriate, given the previous debate on them, and suggested creating a web-based publication that could be updated as necessary.

A draft decision was introduced in the CST on Friday, 7 September and adopted without amendment.

Final Decision: In the decision on the final report of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/L.9), the COP takes note of the final report of the Group of Experts in ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1 to Add.9, and encourages parties to consider and use, as appropriate, the final report in the implementation of the NAPs.

LAND DEGRADATION ASSESSMENT IN DRYLANDS (LADA) PROJECT: On Thursday, 6 September, the Secretariat announced the report on progress of the LADA project (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/9). No comments were offered.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. World Vision International proposed that LADA take into account the needs of “stakeholders” as well as focal points, and the decision was adopted as amended.

Final Decision: In the decision on the LADA project (ICCD/COP(8)/L.10), the COP encourages the continuation of the work on the LADA and the involvement of experts from the roster of independent experts in assessments, invites the CST Bureau to take the necessary action to strengthen its links with the work of the LADA, and invites the LADA to involve, and take account of the needs of, the focal points and stakeholders in its future work.

PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE CST: On Thursday, 6 September, delegates discussed the priority theme for CST 9. Speakers agreed with the need to align the work programme with the ten-year strategic plan and offered options for the theme. Japan suggested benchmarks and indicators, monitoring and assessment and early warning systems; synergies among the Rio conventions; and capacity development for local people. South Africa suggested facilitating the harmonization of national reports, early warning systems, and managing traditional knowledge. Spain proposed examining the costs of not combating land degradation and desertification. Brazil agreed on the importance of traditional knowledge and said any discussion should include benefit sharing and be in the context of negotiations in the CBD.

Chair Dar appointed Canada and Romania as Co-Chairs of a contact group, which developed the proposal to consider bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment to support decision-making in land management. A draft decision was introduced and approved by the CST without comment on Friday, 7 September.

Final Decision: In the decision on the CST programme of work (ICCD/COP(8)/L.11), the COP decides that the CST 9 priority theme will be “bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management.”

FUNCTIONING OF THE CST: On Wednesday, 5 September, delegates discussed the summary of the activities of the Bureau, including recommendations to improve its functioning (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/4). During the discussion of the draft decision, which was introduced on Friday, 7 September, the draft was revised to clarify that the reference to “holding one intersessional meeting and a shorter meeting period that will be held in conjunction with the COP” referred to the possibility of two meetings.

Final Decision: In the decision on the functioning of the CST (ICCD/COP(8)/L.12), the COP requests the Secretariat to facilitate the convening of at least one intersessional meeting of the CST Bureau per year, requests the CST Bureau to increase cooperation with other conventions and scientific processes, and decides to consider the possibility of the CST holding one intersessional meeting and one shorter meeting that will be held in conjunction with the COP.

NETWORKING OF INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND BODIES: On Friday, 7 September, CST delegates considered a draft decision on networking of institutions, agencies and bodies, which was adopted without amendment in plenary.

Final Decision: In the decision on the networking of institutions, agencies and bodies (ICCD/COP(8)/L.13), the COP requests the CST Bureau, in collaboration with the lead institution or consortium selected to co-organize the next CST scientific meeting, to link with networks, institutions, agencies and bodies to address the thematic priority, and to include NGOs and other civil society stakeholders in the network.

RESHAPING THE OPERATION OF THE CST IN LINE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE IIWG TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN: On Wednesday, 5 September, CST delegates considered the review of the functions and the work of the Group of Experts, and procedures for the renewal of the membership of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/6). Many speakers highlighted that the Group of Experts did not have funding to conduct its work, and that a new body should have funding. The European Commission, on behalf of the EU, distributed a draft decision calling for the CST to: be organized in a scientific and technical conference-style format; focus on one thematic topic; and involve an institution or consortium with relevant expertise. Brazil said the CST’s work must remain country-driven. The contact group discussed format and budget options for the EU proposal.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. Argentina and Brazil offered amendments to specify that the proposed conference-style format would be party-led, rather than “jointly” organized by the CST Bureau and a lead institution/consortium. An additional revision was made to request that the Secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, consider mechanisms to secure additional funds. EU-proposed text to encourage the lead institution/consortium to assist in the mobilization of resources was also added.

Final Decision: In the decision on reshaping the operation of the CST in line with the recommendations of the IIWG ten-year strategic plan (ICCD/COP(8)/L.14), the COP decides that each ordinary session shall be organized predominantly in a scientific and technical conference-style format, by the CST Bureau in consultation with the lead institution/consortium. It requests the UNCCD Secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, to consider mechanisms to secure additional funds to support attendance, and encourages the lead institution/consortium to assist in the mobilization of resources.

CLOSING PLENARY

COP President Narbona called the closing plenary to order at 10:55 pm on Friday, 14 September. She called attention to the Madrid Declaration from the Special Segment, said that governments at COP 8 were reaffirming their political commitment to this issue and emphasized the importance of indicators to assess results through the ten-year strategic plan as well as assessments of the costs of inaction in affected areas. She declared that, as COP 8 President, she would work to ensure that the Convention moves forward and asked for delegates’ cooperation throughout the next two years.

Narbona then invited Hama Arba Diallo, former UNCCD Executive Secretary, to address the plenary. Diallo paid tribute to Spain’s commitment to the Convention and for its decision to host COP 8. He congratulated Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary-designate, on his appointment. He encouraged the COP to support the Italian initiative regarding the right to water,

and highlighted the importance of access to energy. He said parties must fully implement and feel morally obliged to the Convention, and that the only criterion for management is a duty to improve the lives of those in the drylands. He expressed his hope that the Secretariat would be given the resources it needs to carry out its job, and closed stating that the “struggle goes on.” Delegates gave him a standing ovation.

CRIC Chair Moore introduced the CRIC 6 decisions, which delegates adopted. Delegates also adopted the draft decision contained in the report of the Bureau of the Conference (ICCD/COP(8)/15) on credentials of delegations (ICCD/COP(8)/15). Decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.30/Rev.1 notes that CRIC 7 will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 20-29 October 2008. Parties took note, with appreciation, of the Declaration of Members of Parliament, contained in the Report of the seventh Round Table of Members of Parliament (ICCD/COP(8)/L.28), and agreed to include it as an annex to the COP 8 report. Delegates elected by acclamation Israel Torres (Panama) as Chair of CRIC 7 and 8. They then adopted two draft decisions from the AHGE: procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation (ICCD/COP(8)/L.22) and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(8)/L.23). The closing plenary was suspended at 11:45 pm to permit the contact group on programme and budget to conclude its deliberations, and the preparation and distribution of outstanding draft decisions.

COP 8 Vice-President Mary Rowen (US) reconvened the closing plenary twice on Saturday morning, 15 September. At 6:20 am, delegates adopted 16 draft decisions, taking into account the amendments proposed in the final COW, which convened intermittently with the closing plenary.

On the Programme of Work of COP 9 (ICCD/COP(8)/L.26), Spain emphasized the need to ensure the effective participation of civil society, requested that modalities be put in place for their involvement, and said they should be included as a COP 9 agenda item.

Plenary agreed to adopt the Draft Report of the Session (ICCD/COP(8)/L.28), circulated in English only, and to authorize the Rapporteur to finalize it with assistance from the Secretariat. Plenary also adopted the decision on Expressions of Gratitude to the Government and People of Spain (ICCD/COP(8)/L.2). Argentina, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, thanked Spain and noted Argentina’s historic links with Spain.

At 6:39 am, the plenary was suspended to allow the COW to adopt its decision on the way forward on the programme and budget. The COW concluded its work at 6:45 am.

When plenary reconvened at 7:33 am, Vice-President Rowen highlighted that the COP had adopted the ten-year strategic plan and said she looked forward to the successful implementation of the decisions adopted at the COP. She asked delegates to consider the proposal to hold an Extraordinary COP, taking into account the elements for the meeting that were orally presented to the COW by Chair Anaedu. Responding to a question from Portugal, on behalf of the EU, regarding whether or not Japan’s proposal had been adopted by the COW, UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten affirmed that it had been adopted, reiterated that an Extraordinary COP will be held, and said it

would be in New York, with Terms of Reference as elaborated by the COW Chair. Noting that no delegation requested the floor to make a closing statement, Vice-President Rowen invited de Kalbermatten to make his closing remarks. He said that, given the extraordinary manner in which the session had ended, he would set aside his speech. He thanked the Secretariat staff for their patience throughout COP 9, expressed his belief that all was not lost, noted that the Convention had gained a ten-year strategic plan, and said he could not commit the new Executive Secretary to implement it without the resources to do so. He thanked the Chairs of the contact groups for their “splendid” work, and expressed hope that their “kindred spirit would carry us to COP 9.”

Spain thanked delegations for their participation, noted that the session had been productive, expressed hope that the few problems encountered would be resolved at the next COP, and said the Ministry of Environment would continue to give impetus to the ten-year strategic plan. Vice-President Rowen gavelled the meeting to a close at 7:43 am, Saturday, 15 September 2007.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP 8

BUILDING AN OASIS IN A DESERT OF POLITICAL WILL

The dancing and applause over “symbolic draft decisions” that reportedly followed some of the contact groups’ deliberations at the UNCCD COP 8 capture the feeling that pervaded the Palacio de Congresos in Madrid on 14 September, the COP’s last official day. Many looked to COP 8’s primary achievements, namely the adoption of a ten-year strategic plan and refocusing of its institutions, as a way to move the Convention forward. They were satisfied that the strategic plan provides a shared vision of where the COP needs to go over the next decade, offers greater clarity in the purpose and expectations of its various institutions, and prioritizes the activities of the Secretariat.

Reports that consensus seemed to be emerging in the programme and budget contact group to increase the Secretariat’s budget by 5% in euro terms (a 21% increase in US dollar terms) further raised participants’ assessments that COP 8’s decisions could turn the Convention in a new direction. Many departed the conference hall early because few anticipated that the sense of euphoria could quickly change to a sense of gloom in the closing plenary during the early hours of Saturday morning, when one delegation failed to approve the budget in the closing plenary. This analysis focuses on the gains made in the delicate negotiating environment of COP 8, and assesses how the COP’s inability to approve a budget and the decision to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York before the end of 2007 may impact the realization of those gains.

THE OASIS – THE TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

With the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan at COP 8, there was a feeling that the problems that had impeded the effective implementation of the UNCCD might finally be addressed. The ten-year strategic plan was recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the UN to provide a common and focused vision for the Convention and to address operational inefficiencies within its institutions. It strives to link the work programmes of the Convention’s institutions to this

common vision, clarifies their mandates and methods of work, and institutionalizes a results-based management approach. Delegates' desire to change the Convention's course was evident in their statements at the opening plenary, during which they expressed their support for the strategic plan, thus facilitating its adoption without renegotiation and paving the way for consensus over the direction the COP institutions, such as the CRIC, CST, GM-Secretariat relationship and the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs).

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention: The CRIC is supposed to review the implementation of the Convention and facilitate information exchange on measures adopted by parties. While delegations appreciate its utility in theory, the CRIC has been a source of frustration because many feel it lacks clear terms of reference and that its method of work, primarily through the delivery of statements about country reports, has not helped parties to generate the knowledge they need to improve policy and Convention implementation. Many parties suggested that the new panel format adopted at CRIC 5 in March 2007 began to address this problem, but observed that decisions related to how reports are analyzed and packaged, and how lessons are learned, delivered and received, are key to the CRIC's future success. To this end, parties decided to renew the CRIC's mandate, but did so with the understanding that this has been clarified under the ten-year strategic plan, which provides requirements for performance monitoring, and that its terms of reference will be revisited and revised as necessary at COP 9, thus providing checks and balances to promote its improved functioning in the future.

Committee on Science and Technology: CST 8 received its Group of Experts' final report, which consisted of a series of research projects and resulting recommendations. In the end, however, the Group of Experts mechanism was not viewed as the proper format to bring scientific advice related to drylands and desertification into the Convention, given the range in the quality of the reports and limited engagement of some of the Group's experts, due in part to the fact that the Group was not given a budget. Realizing that this model was not effective, the CST's decision simply "takes note" of the Group's report and encourages parties to use, as appropriate, the final report in their implementation activities.

Thus, the CST turned its attention to developing an alternative format that would engage the scientific community in the issues on the UNCCD agenda, settling on a proposal calling for future CST meetings to be organized predominantly in a scientific and technical conference-style format by the CST Bureau, in consultation with a lead institution/consortium. Scientists in the room were clearly excited at the prospect of engaging in scientific exchanges at upcoming meetings and believed that scientists' attendance at the next CST session would increase. In addition, some hoped that the COP 8 decision to schedule CST 9 and CRIC 7 together and with a coordinated agenda would permit new synergies between these two bodies. Some noted that challenges still remain, especially since this new format still lacks a mechanism to translate scientific advice into CST recommendations that can aid national governments in their implementation efforts.

GM-Secretariat Relationship: The relationship between the GM and the Secretariat came under intense scrutiny during COP 8. Despite their preferences for either the GM or the Secretariat, delegations across the board highlighted concerns about their overlapping activities and lack of coordination and mutual support. The decision to have the JIU carry out an independent assessment of the GM, as had happened with the Secretariat following the COP 6 decision to that effect, was the compromise that many hoped would lead to positive change. This COP 8 decision was considered as pivotal by those who: consider the GM to be misunderstood given the changing context of development finance; appreciate its reforms, which increase its capacity to act as an effective broker to mobilize resources; and want it to "speak the same language" as the Secretariat. The clear mandates that many hope will result from the review could help improve the relationship between the GM and those country parties that have been frustrated by its current operation, or at the very least provide clear expectations of what it is supposed to do.

Regional Coordination Units: The value added of the three RCUs in Africa, Asia and Latin America has been a point of contention at UNCCD COPs since they were introduced at COP 3. Optimists agree that the decision to continue supporting the RCUs, pending a review that will be considered by the COP, offers a turning point. Pessimists note that the COP still has not officially institutionalized the RCUs, and believe that they will continue to face many difficulties in performing a coordination role in their regions. Consequently, observers note that the RCUs will have to demonstrate their worth, both in their own right and in relation to comparable mechanisms. Either way, the COP decision may have set in motion a reform process to ensure that the RCUs are efficient, different and responsive to their constituencies, otherwise they will cause their own undoing.

THE DESERT – BUDGET BATTLES

The Secretariat's budget has increasingly become the most sensitive COP issue. Among the reasons cited by participants for the contention over the budget are: the significant cut to the Secretariat's core budget for the biennium 2006-2007 during the negotiating process at COP 7; the depreciation of the dollar – the UN's accounting currency – relative to the euro, which is the Secretariat's main currency; and the decrease in voluntary contributions to the Secretariat coupled with increased demands on it from parties. Together this has resulted in staff layoffs and an increased work load. Furthermore, the budget level has become a signal of parties' political commitment to the Convention.

Some delegates arrived in Madrid with instructions from their capitals to agree to a zero nominal growth budget due in part to uncertainty regarding who would be appointed as the next Executive Secretary. Thus initial reports that the contact group on programme and budget had agreed to increase the budget by 5% in euro terms, led participants to highlight the decision as a positive political signal, because it was higher than any previous increase in the UNCCD budget. This change was attributed to the positive outcome of the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. Furthermore, during the second week of the COP, parties had an opportunity to meet the Executive Secretary-designate, Luc Gnacadja. Although few knew him, many approved of his credentials. Thus, they said that their approval

of a modest budget increase sought to demonstrate their support, while allowing them time to observe his performance. However, a budget was not approved because Japan held to its position for zero nominal growth.

Although many delegations were disappointed by the outcome, participants in the contact group reported that Japan consistently held to his instructions, going along with the proposed increase while reserving the right to consult his government. Some delegates agree that his Prime Minister's resignation during the COP ultimately left him with no room to make a last minute deviation from his instructions. Others note that the emphasis on modest growth budgets is not unique to the UNCCD. Rather, it is a growing trend in development aid and multilateral processes. While ebbing resource flows to the budgets of multilateral environmental agreements is not unique to the UNCCD, it remains the primary lens through which commitment to this Convention is gauged.

MOVING FORWARD

While disappointment spilled out of the Palacio de Congressos as the last remaining delegates left the building at 8:30 am on Saturday, 15 September, the big question that remained was what effect the Extraordinary COP in New York might have on COP 8's outcomes. Some believe that governments will positively assess the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and the appointment of the new Executive Secretary, and approve an increase in the budget, which could lead to a renewed faith in, and commitment to, the Convention. Others believe that no budget increase will be approved and that the Secretariat will continue to face financial difficulties. In this case, the pressure on the Executive Secretary will be even greater to deliver visible signs of his management skills in order to re-engage the international community in the Convention. In the final analysis, as Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, told delegates during the round table discussion, "political will, not any amount of institutional reform," will ultimately determine whether a convention is able to deliver.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON CLIMATE CHANGE: A high-level ministerial meeting will take place on 24 September 2007, at UN headquarters in New York. The purpose of the event is to promote dialogue, highlight priority issues within four broad thematic areas, and mobilize support at the highest level for a strong political signal to the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali that governments are ready to accelerate work under the UNFCCC. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/climatechange/2007highlevel/index.shtml>

EXPERT GROUP MEETING: INNOVATIVE FINANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The Division for Sustainable Development, which acts as Secretariat to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), will organize this meeting from 18-19 October 2007, in New York. It will focus particularly on the themes of CSD-16: agriculture, desertification, drought, rural development, including a special focus on Africa. For more information, contact: the Division for

Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdiissues/finance/egm2007/index.htm>

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE UNCCD COP:

This extraordinary meeting of the UNCCD COP will take place during the UN General Assembly in New York to resolve the question of the UNCCD budget that was left pending from COP 8. The date will be announced by the Secretariat. For more information, contact the UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: <http://www.unccd.int>.

CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR AFRICA: This meeting will take place from 22-25 October 2007, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Josué Dioné; tel: +251 11 551 0406; fax: +251 11 551 0350; e-mail: jdione@uneca.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>.

FIFTH TRONDHEIM CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY: The fifth Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity will be held from 29 October - 2 November 2007, in Trondheim, Norway, under the theme "Ecosystems and people - biodiversity for development - the road to 2010 and beyond." For more information, contact: Norway's Directorate for Nature Management; tel: +47-73-58-05-00, fax: +47-73-58-05-01; e-mail: trondheim.conference@dirnat.no; internet: <http://www.trondheimconference.org/>

TPN6 WORKSHOP ON ENABLING POLICIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNCCD: This workshop is expected to take place in November 2007 in Islamabad, Pakistan. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: <http://www.unccd.int>.

CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR WESTERN ASIA: This meeting will convene from 4-6 November 2007, in Cairo, Egypt. It will be organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Anhar Hegazi; tel: +961-1-978502; e-mail: hegazi@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>

27TH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE: IPCC-27 will take place from 12-16 November 2007, in Valencia, Spain, and will focus on the adoption of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report. For more information, contact: Rudie Bourgeois, IPCC Secretariat; tel: +41-22-730-8208; fax: +41-22-730-8025; e-mail: IPCCSec@wmo.int; internet: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE ON IMPACTS AND ADVANCED CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGIES FOR THE AFRICAN AND MEDITERRANEAN REGIONS: This meeting will convene from 18-20 November 2007, in Tunis, Tunisia. For more information, contact: Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, General Direction of Environment and Quality of Life; tel: +216-70-728-679; fax: +216-70-728-595; e-mail: DGEQV@mineat.gov.tn.

CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: This meeting will take place from 26-27 November 2007, in Jakarta, Indonesia. It will be organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact Hitomi Rankine, Environmental Affairs Officer; tel: +662-288-1234; fax: +662-288-1059; e-mail: rankine.unescap@un.org; internet: <http://www.unescap.org/esd/rim/16th/>

CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: This meeting will take place from 28-29 November 2007, in Santiago, Chile. It will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Marianne Schaper; tel: +56-2-471-2000; fax: +56-2-208-0252; e-mail: Marianne.SCHAPER@cepal.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>.

UNFCCC COP 13 AND MOP 3 FOR THE KYOTO

PROTOCOL: These meetings will convene from 3-14 December 2007, in Bali, Indonesia. These meetings will coincide with the 27th meetings of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments from Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol. COP 13 and COP/MOP 3 are also expected to be accompanied by a UNFCCC Dialogue on Long-Term Cooperative Action on Climate Change and various other events. For more information, contact the UNFCCC Secretariat: tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int>.

CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

FOR EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA: This meeting will convene from 28-29 January 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland. It will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Monika Linn; e-mail: monika.linn@unece.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>.

DELHI SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

(DSDS) 2008: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: This meeting will convene from 7-9 February 2008, in New Delhi, India. It will offer a platform for leading figures from North and South to address climate change and sustainable development. For more information, contact: Summit Secretariat, TERI; tel: +91 11 24682100 / 41504900; fax: +91 11 24682144 / 24682145; e-mail: dsds@teri.res.in; internet: <http://www.teriin.org/dsds/2008/index.htm>

CSD-16: This meeting will take place from 5-16 May 2008, at UN headquarters in New York. This review session will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. For more information, contact: Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>

NINTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:

CBD COP-9 will take place from 19-30 May 2008, in Bonn, Germany, including a high level segment from 28-30 May. For more

information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; internet: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=COP-09>

CRIC 7 AND CST 9: Based on COP 8 decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.30/Rev.1, CRIC 7 will convene from 20-29 October 2008, in Istanbul, Turkey. Based on COP 8 decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.17, CST 9 shall be held in conjunction with this session of the CRIC. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: <http://www.unccd.int>.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING

FOR CSD-17: This meeting will convene from 23-27 February 2009, at UN headquarters in New York. Participants will prepare for the May 2009 policy session of CSD-17, which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. For more information, contact: Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>

CSD-17: This meeting will convene from 4-15 May 2009, at UN headquarters in New York. For more information, contact: Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; DESA Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>

UNCCD COP 9: UNCCD COP 9 is expected to be held in Bonn, Germany, in Autumn 2009, in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session and meet the additional financial costs. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: <http://www.unccd.int>

GLOSSARY

AHGE	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Group of Experts
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
COW	Committee of the Whole
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIWG	Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group
IYDD	International Year on Deserts and Desertification
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
NAP	National Action Programme
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change